



BLAC

BLACK LEADERSHIP
ADVISORY COUNCIL

2024 Policy Recommendations

AFRICAN DIASPORA COMMITTEE POLICY RECOMMENDATION



1 Issue a Proclamation for Africa Day on May 25th

Michigan is a great place to live, not only because of its beautiful lakes and beaches, but also for the diversity of populations that live here. While there are many ethnic day celebrations throughout the calendar year, Africa Day is one not yet celebrated in Michigan although the African population continues to grow.

We do want to distinguish the difference between African and Black or African American people because not all black people are African American. “Black and African Americans” is a phrase used to describe a diverse array of people. Racial and ethnic identities — and the language surrounding them — are continuously evolving, both generationally and through nuanced self-identification. Generally, the term Black denotes a racial identification, while African American refers to an ethnicity, specifically Americans with ancestry from one or more of the African continent’s Black racial groups. Historically, the term Black American

referred to people of African descent with dark skin. In modern contexts, however, Black identity is not inherently tied to dark skin or specifically African descent. Black people may have light skin, or identify as Afro-Caribbean, Indigenous Australian, or Melanesian.

Africa Day, formerly known as ‘African Liberation Day’ or ‘African Freedom Day’ is the annual commemoration of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on May 25, 1963. It is celebrated by various countries in the African continent, as well as around the world. The organization was created to deal with the continental affairs of the emerging independent Africa states from European colonialism. In 2002, the OAU was transformed into its successor organization, the present-day African Union (AU).

Africa Day is celebrated in recognition of African nations gaining independence

from western powers that had ruled many of them for decades. There was a need to articulate the aspirations of African people, marking the onward progress of the liberation movement, and acknowledging the determination of the people of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation, hence the observance of Africa Day once a year.

Africa is continuously growing in population and their economy, but still face many challenges such as the impact of Covid-19, climate change, war and conflict, and a severe food crisis.

Many communities of color are unaware of the various African cultures in Michigan.

It is important that we all increase our awareness and celebrate each other as minorities, and a state. This is another way to celebrate diversity, highlight successes and cultural and economic potential.

In 1958, the First Congress of Independent African States was convened in Accra, Ghana by independence leader Kwame Nkrumah, who later became the first president of Ghana. In attendance were African leaders and political activists representing the “independent” Governments of Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Union of the Peoples of Cameroon, and the National Liberation Front of Algeria. The Conference of Independent African States marked the formal launching of the Pan-African movement on African soil and brought together leaders of nationalist movements who proclaimed African solidarity in the struggle against colonialism on the continent.



The 1958 conference was followed by another five years later in 1963, at which representatives of 32 African governments gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to sign a common charter setting up the OAU. The year 1963 has been called “Africa’s Unity Year,” which began the push towards decolonization and the process of continental integration of the African states to secure the long-term economic and political future of the continent.

The formation of the OAU/AU was strongly influenced by the intellectual, cultural, and political movement of Pan-Africanism. Dating back to the 19th century, Pan-Africanism is a socio-political worldview, philosophy and

movement stressing the principles of the unity of the African continent and peoples of African heritage in political, cultural, and economic matters. Celebrating 54 years of the OAU/AU, the occasion gives an opportunity for Africans and people of African descent to look back on the achievements of the Pan-African movement at national, regional, and continental levels in Africa and pay special tribute to the legacy and values of the founding fathers of the OAU. The celebration also provides the opportunity for African nations to look ahead to accelerate socio-economic integration across the continent and assert Africa’s place on the global stage (Library of Congress).

Proposed solution:

BLAC and the African Diaspora Committee are requesting a proclamation from the governor that designates May 25th as Africa Day. We believe with recognition from the Governor, more people will engage and be willing to learn more about the African culture in Michigan. Awareness can contribute to connection with fellow diasporans, create local partnerships with organizations that support immigrant communities of African descent that contribute to the economy of Michigan.

Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

- ▶ Las Vegas hosts an Africa Day event yearly in the month of May.
- ▶ The Atlantic Council hosted Africa Day 2023: A Conversation with Congress, with U.S. Representative Sara Jacobs (D-CA), ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, and U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN), the first and only member of Congress born on the African continent (atlanticcouncil.org).
- ▶ New York boasts The Africa Center on Fifth Avenue at the intersection of Harlem and the Museum Mile, which celebrates the holiday with events and exhibits (theafricacenter.org).
- ▶ Burlington, Vermont celebrated the day in 2024 with several local organizations (wcax.com).
- ▶ The U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The proclamation should be executed by the governor before Africa Day on May 25, 2025.



ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE POLICY RECOMMENDATION

2 Increase Funding to Michigan Arts Council

The arts use a creative process that requires thinking in new and innovative ways. Michigan formerly ranked #2 behind New York in the arts. In 1990, the Michigan Arts Council was eliminated by then Governor John Engler. The council would be re-instated in later years but suffered severe financial cuts from a robust \$24 million to \$12 million under Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Talented creatives obtain higher education at Michigan colleges and universities, but they leave Michigan once they obtain their degree. Michigan is challenged with recruiting and retaining talent to Michigan. Michigan has experienced a steady decline in population for several years.

The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) was developed through a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Their 2022 Creative Economy Profile for Michigan addresses state arts and culture production. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that arts and cultural production accounts for \$18,394,137,000 and 2.95% of the Michigan economy, contributing 120,714 jobs.

\$18,394,137,000

Total Value Added

2.95%

Arts and Cultural
Share of Total Gross
State Product (GSP)

\$4,886,735,000

Core Arts and Cultural
Production

\$12,713,873,000

Supporting Arts and
Cultural Production

Arts and cultural Value Added in Michigan ranked 4th among the comparison sectors of Retail, Construction, and Transportation.

The [Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account](#) (ACPSA) contains detailed data on 35 key industries within the arts and cultural economy. These industries range from core arts and cultural production to industries supporting arts and cultural activities.

Theater teaches essential soft skills that foster empathy and effective interactions with others, aiding in human development regardless of the career path one chooses to pursue. Theater is the most comprehensive art form, enveloping all other forms of art, including music, dance, fine art, film, and visual art. Theatre in the high school is both an academic discipline and a performing art. A study of theatre motivates students to study and develop ideas, insights, and values. The primary component of theatre — dialogue — provides a uniquely effective method for studying the communicative functions of human language. Artistic and creative practices can help us reckon with the past and pave the way to a more racially just and equitable recovery. Social cohesion also matters and contributes to confronting systemic inequities, supporting health and well-being, and bridging across differences.

The lack of racial diversity in the arts sector is a deeper problem that requires examining the policies and practices that organizations enforce.

A research report published in 2019 by Americans for the Arts finds that 82% of employees in the arts are White. Over the last decade, several arts organizations and local governments have made diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) declarations and established initiatives to increase the percentage of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) working in the arts. Institutional racism in the arts, prevent BIPOC persons from being hired, retained, and promoted. The same report states that over 90% of employees in the arts have at least a four-year bachelor's degree. The education disparity shows that Blacks, Latinx, and Asians are only receiving just over 30% of four-year





bachelor's degrees in a given year, so there is an immediate disadvantage when jobs in the arts require a four-year degree. In 2015, when President Obama announced his America's College Promise to make two years of community college free in the U.S. Institutions currently hiring should support candidates with a two-year college education. In fact, the arts sector should work in partnership with the community college system to create a track that leads to employment in the arts.

The fiscal year 2006 appropriation bill (Senate Bill 274) for the Department of History, Arts and Libraries, provided \$53.9 million in funding, which included \$41.8 million in general funds, to support the state in its efforts to preserve Michigan's history and historic treasures, provide the very best in state-of-the-art library technology and services, and to promote creativity in the arts and cultural disciplines. Governor Granholm expressed her disappointment that the Legislature chose to reduce payments to state libraries and arts and cultural institutions that benefit all Michigan residents while supporting projects that only benefit a few. The Governor vetoed those projects inserted by the Legislature and recommended they use available funding to restore aid to libraries and arts and cultural grants equally.

Funding from foundations and individual donors makes up almost half of the annual revenue for the nonprofit cultural sector, and it's mostly going to organizations preserving Western European high culture. Small BIPOC-led arts organizations must compete with larger institutions for funding to support outreach programs in underserved communities of color. The problem is when the larger institution writes into their grant that they intend to fulfill the outreach program by partnering with small organizations from those communities, not realizing that they're competing for the same funds. The larger institution wins the grant, then hires the small organization for their cultural labor, tapping into their thought-leadership and networks to their full benefit.

A more equitable distribution of funds should be awarded directly to the smaller BIPOC arts organizations that are fully capable of fulfilling the requirements of the grant. Most times, they already have an ongoing program in those communities and would have been able to apply these funds towards their operational and staffing costs to keep people employed. Instead, the opportunity turns into a small project-based payday.

Self-expression, communication, and collaboration are just a few important skills supporting healthy, meaningful relationships. The arts allow us to share ideas, skills, and experiences in a way that cultivates lasting connections critical to building these relationships. By providing students an opportunity to engage in the four major artistic processes — creating, performing, responding, and connecting — we not only make their school experience more meaningful and personal, but allow the magic of the arts to deepen interpersonal connections within our school communities (Farrington et al., 2019).

Social-emotional learning skills, like relationship building, are essential to classroom and work success. Relationship skills include students' abilities to connect with others, demonstrate empathy, and understand various perspectives to build and maintain healthy, rewarding relationships (Farrington et al., 2019). Integrating arts in various forms and spaces is an approach educators can use to support students' development of interpersonal and relationship skills, leading to a highly social, interactive, and collaborative avenue for self-expression, communication, and problem-solving. Additionally, art encourages community cohesion, reduces isolation, increases self-awareness.

Organizations like [ADCOLOR](#), which established with the goal of creating a

community of diverse professional, who support and celebrate one another, by helping individuals and organizations to rise up and let their accomplishments and ideas shine. They in turn teach new leaders and would-be mentors how to reach back and find others who need to be supported, noticed, and promoted. We need more programs, leaders, and mentors if we intend to retain talent in Michigan.

Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

According to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), 27 states and territories have a percent-for-art program including: Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Each council, commission or agency operates differently by state. Funds may be used for works of art on buildings, acquiring art, allocating funding for construction, reconstruction, or remodeling state buildings. Massachusetts's governor issued an executive order creating a percent-for-art program in 2014, but the program has yet to be established. Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Wisconsin had but no longer have programs.

Proposed solution:

BLAC is proposing the creation of policy that increases funding for the arts, creates new programming and fellowship opportunities, to retain black talent in Michigan.

BUSINESS LEADERS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

3 Pay Transparency

Pay transparency is crucial for fostering a fair and equitable work environment.

Without transparency, disparities in pay can go unnoticed and unaddressed, leading to dissatisfaction and low morale among employees. Studies have consistently shown pay gaps based on factors such as gender, race, and ethnicity persist in many industries. By providing transparent information about compensation, companies can identify and rectify these disparities, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and equitable workplace. Furthermore, pay transparency promotes trust and accountability within the organization. When employees have access to information about how salaries are determined and how they compare to their peers, they are more likely to feel valued and respected by their employer. This transparency also holds employers accountable for their compensation practices, encouraging them to ensure fairness and consistency across the board. Additionally, transparent pay practices can help attract and retain top talent, as prospective employees are more likely to be attracted to companies that prioritize fairness and openness in their compensation policies.

In today's increasingly diverse and socially conscious workforce, pay transparency is not just a moral imperative, but also a strategic business decision. Companies that embrace transparency in their compensation practices not only foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace culture but also gain a competitive edge in attracting and retaining talent. By presenting facts and data that highlight the

importance and benefits of pay transparency, organizations can make a compelling case for adopting more transparent compensation practices.

The lack of pay transparency disproportionately impacts Black communities in Michigan and exacerbates existing disparities in employment opportunities and economic outcomes. Without clear information about salary ranges or compensation structures, Black job seekers may invest time and resources in applying for positions that ultimately offer inadequate pay. This can perpetuate financial insecurity and limit access to higher-paying jobs, perpetuating a cycle of economic disadvantage. For many Black individuals who face systemic barriers to employment, such as limited access to transportation or networks, the absence of pay transparency further compounds these challenges. Relying on friends, family, or public transportation to attend job interviews becomes not only a logistical hurdle but also a financial burden when candidates discover that the salary offered does not align with their expectations or needs. This experience can lead to frustration, disillusionment, and a sense of being undervalued in the job market. Moreover, the prevalence of job postings that omit salary ranges disproportionately affects Black job seekers who may already face discrimination or bias during the hiring process. Without transparency, there is a risk of perpetuating wage gaps and perpetuating

disparities in income and wealth accumulation within Black communities. Implementing pay transparency laws, as seen in other states, would be a crucial step toward addressing these disparities and promoting greater equity in employment opportunities for Black individuals in Michigan.

Implementing pay transparency laws in Michigan would require companies to disclose salary ranges or compensation structures in job postings and during the hiring process. This solution would provide Black job seekers, along with all other applicants, with critical information upfront, empowering them to make informed decisions about which opportunities to pursue. By promoting greater transparency in compensation practices, this solution aims to reduce disparities in pay and increase equity in employment opportunities for Black communities in Michigan.

Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

- ▶ CO, CT, MD, NV, RI — enacted pay transparency laws that apply to all employers.

- ▶ CA, NY, WA, Jersey City, Cincinnati, Toledo — enacted pay transparency laws that apply to employers with >15 employees.

Proposed solution:

BLAC is proposing the implementation of pay transparency laws in Michigan to address the systemic barriers faced by Black communities in accessing fair and equitable employment opportunities. This solution entails enacting legislation that mandates companies to disclose salary ranges or compensation structures in job postings and during the hiring process. By ensuring transparency in compensation practices, this initiative aims to level the playing field for Black job seekers and promote greater equity in the workforce.

To execute this solution effectively, BLAC recommends collaboration between lawmakers, advocacy groups, and employers to develop and implement comprehensive pay transparency policies. This may involve conducting outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness



about the importance of pay transparency and its benefits for all workers, particularly those from marginalized communities. Additionally, enforcement mechanisms should be established to hold companies accountable for compliance with pay transparency laws and to address instances of non-compliance or discrimination.

By working together to implement pay transparency measures, Michigan can take meaningful steps toward dismantling systemic barriers to economic opportunity and promoting fairness and equality in the workplace for Black communities and beyond.

Michigan currently has two pay transparency bills pending: HB 4406 and SB 142. Legislation would require employers to provide employees, within 30 days of their request, with wage information for similarly situated employees covering a period of not more than three years before the date of the request. Employers would be permitted to redact the names of similarly situated employees but would be required to provide information about the sex and seniority of the similarly situated employees.

To support the adoption of pay transparency laws in Michigan, BLAC will engage in a multifaceted advocacy approach aimed at raising awareness, mobilizing support, and advocating for policy change.

Key strategies BLAC will implement:

- ▶ **Community Education and Outreach:** BLAC will conduct educational campaigns to inform the public, including Black communities and other stakeholders, about the importance of pay transparency and its potential benefits for economic equity. This may include hosting workshops, webinars, and community forums to discuss the impact of pay disparities and the need for legislative action.

- ▶ **Coalition Building:** BLAC will collaborate with other advocacy groups, civil rights organizations, and grassroots movements to build a coalition in support of pay transparency laws. By leveraging collective voices and resources, BLAC aims to amplify the call for policy change and demonstrate broad-based support from diverse communities.
- ▶ **Legislative Advocacy:** BLAC will engage with policymakers, elected officials, and legislative bodies at the local, state, and federal levels to advocate for the introduction and passage of pay transparency legislation. This may involve meeting with lawmakers, testifying at hearings, drafting policy proposals, and mobilizing community members to contact their representatives.
- ▶ **Research and Data Collection:** BLAC will conduct research and gather data to support the case for pay transparency laws, including studies on wage disparities, employment trends, and the impact of pay transparency on economic equity. By providing evidence-based arguments, BLAC aims to persuade policymakers and stakeholders of the need for legislative action.
- ▶ **Grassroots Mobilization:** BLAC will align with grassroots activists and advocates who have the resources and methodology to advance these policies through such practices as petition drives, letter-writing campaigns, and rallies. By engaging directly with the public and empowering individuals to act, BLAC seeks to build momentum and pressure for policy change.

Overall, BLAC is committed to leveraging its resources, networks, and expertise to support the adoption of pay transparency laws in Michigan and advance economic equity for Black communities and all workers.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION



4 Statutory Changes to Education Funding Through Categorical Funding to At-Risk Students

The BLAC Education Committee commends Governor Whitmer’s continued efforts of making historic investments into Michigan’s K-12 education system. Governor Whitmer has worked diligently to bring equity to the state’s school funding, but Michigan’s daunting challenges on the school funding front persist. According to Michigan State University education professor David Arsen, Ph.D., Michigan has been the last state in school funding growth among all states since the passage of Proposal A School Finance Reform in 1994. Per capita and school funding declined by 22% between 2002 and 2015. But even these devastating numbers don’t fully describe the impact on Black students. During that same period, funding for at-risk students dropped by 60%.

School districts are still dependent on their local property tax base to fund school facility construction and repair, replicating existing inequity. In 2018, the School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) released the results of a comprehensive adequacy study, including a recommendation for a new, “weighted” funding formula that would consider student needs like poverty, special education, language status, as well as the size and location of the district. Affluent communities typically have well-funded schools and low-income areas have poorly funded schools.

The study also recommended total funding for universal early education. It noted that further research would be needed on transportation, food service and building costs, which were

not included in this initial step. Professor Arsen estimates that implementing these recommendations would require at least \$2-\$6 billion in additional funding, based on updated recommendations from the SFRC in 2021.

Black Americans understand that education is a must to be successful in life and achieve economic sustainability. Without quality education, students are likely to be unemployed and underemployed as adults.

An article published by CBS News in September 2023, highlighted the disrepair and poor health conditions that are representative of some black school districts that are underinvested. School districts are mostly funded by local taxes; therefore, wealthier school districts have more money to invest in building improvements. Unequal funding for schools creates differences in the quality of teachers, quality of education, and opportunities for students. When there is less funding for schools in lower-income areas, they may have a harder time hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers. This means that targeted increases in funding could help narrow the achievement gap between poor and nonpoor students.

Governor Whitmer has worked with the Legislature to allocate the School Aid Fund to equalize the foundation allowance across all districts and increase investment in funding for students in special education, students in poverty and students in English as a second language programs. The BLAC Education Committee applauds these efforts and increases, but we believe the conversation must shift from equal funding to a weighted formula that provides equitable resources to districts who support populations whose presenting situations require more to fully engage students and families, within an education system that for far too long has disinvested from their future.

Weighted Student Funding has the potential to significantly increase funding equity, transparency, and flexibility, thus empowering principals to design schools to best meet their students' unique needs. The model uses objective and measurable student characteristics such as poverty status, English Language Learners (ELL), students with disabilities, grad enrolled, low academic performance, or high academic performance status, as weights (Education Resource Strategies, August 2018).

Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

- ▶ California — adopted in 2013, titled Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
- ▶ Colorado, Delaware, New Jersey, Nevada, Mississippi

Stakeholders who support proposed solution:

- ▶ Michigan Department of Education — Supporters
- ▶ School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) — Supporters

Michigan needs statutory changes to increase the School Aid Fund revenue by at least \$6 billion and establish a permanent weighted funding formula based on student and community need and universal early education (0-3). Although the Governor cannot implement either of these unilaterally, we recommend she convene legislative leadership to draft and introduce this legislation and propose more significant increases in categorical funding to at-risk students and students in special education through the budgeting process.

HEALTH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

5 Amending Mental Health Licensing Rules for Equity: A Call for Support

There is a critical shortage of Black professionals in Michigan and nationwide, particularly within the mental health care sector.

This deficit is largely attributed to stringent licensing rules and regulations that create substantial barriers to entry into the profession.

The path to licensure is hindered by high fees, intricate administrative procedures, and standardized exams developed by private, for-profit entities that often do not align with real-world clinical practice. Data shows that people of color, especially Black professionals, encounter lower pass rates on these state licensing exams, such as the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Clinical Exam and Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology.

Current policymaking approaches fail to consider the diverse experiences and challenges faced by Black candidates, perpetuating systemic barriers that impede social mobility within the mental health profession. These obstacles significantly limit access to culturally competent mental health care providers and services in underserved Black communities.

Current Barriers to enter the social work profession:

The path to licensure for clinical social work in Michigan is hindered by the ASWB Clinical Exam, these exams, criticized for their cost, lack of practical relevance, and racial biases, contribute to lower pass rates among Black applicants compared to their White counterparts. This perpetuates systemic barriers that limit Black professionals' entry into the mental health workforce.

An article released by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in August 2022, highlighted the publication of the 2022 Exam Pass Rate Analysis by the ASWB. This disclosure follows years of advocacy by NASW, other social work organizations, schools of social work, and individual advocates, urging ASWB to release data it had previously kept confidential for decades. The data uncovered significant differences in pass rates among racial groups, especially for Black test takers. The full report shows that White examinees were almost twice as likely as Black examinees to pass the ASWB Clinical Exam on their first attempt. The ASWB Clinical Level Exam, is the exam used in most states for licensure as a social worker providing mental health care. If you are a White woman, your chances of passing the ASWB Clinical Exam on your first attempt are 84%. If you are a Black man, your chances of passing on your first attempt are just 37%. This data supports the notion that license exams are more than passive recipients of existing inequities in training, and the testing process itself, actively heightens racial disparities and inequity in the mental health work force.

New policy changes by ASWB have required that many states place the clinical social work exam after the completion of all other licensure requirements, including successful completion of a graduate degree and years of supervised experience. If those other processes themselves are inequitable, then the population that successfully completes those

processes should be relatively well-equipped (and more similarly equipped across racial groups than at the beginning of graduate education) to handle a testing process that simply receives those pre-existing differences.

Current Barriers to entry the psychology profession:

Aside from social work, similar barriers and complication exist for the psychology profession. The Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) has been criticized for its validity and potential biases. Studies, including those funded by the Lupe Murchison Foundation, question whether these exams adequately measure the skills necessary for effective psychological practice. Concerns about convergent and discriminant validity suggest that while these exams may be reliable, they may not accurately assess the practical competencies required in their respective fields.

Impact:

The disparities in the mental health workforce have far-reaching impacts beyond individual practitioners, significantly affecting the Black community's access to culturally competent care. Obstacles in obtaining licensure for Black professionals reduce the pool of providers who understand the cultural, social, and economic realities of Black communities. This underrepresentation not only widens service gaps but perpetuates inequities, exacerbating untreated mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Moreover, it discourages future generations from entering the field, further silencing Black voices in mental health discussions and policymaking. These barriers reinforce stigma and contribute to systemic inequities in healthcare access and outcomes. Addressing these licensing disparities in clinical social work and psychology is crucial for achieving professional equity and improving the overall well-being of

Michigan's Black communities. Reevaluating licensing rules, replacing biased exams, and promoting diversity and inclusion in mental health professions are essential steps towards ensuring equitable access to care for all residents.

Proposed solution:

- ▶ **Alternative Exam:** Michigan should develop and implement a state-sponsored alternative examination designed by local scholars. This new exam will accurately assess the competencies and ethical standards necessary for effective practice in the state's diverse communities. By reducing biases and barriers that disproportionately affect Black and other minority candidates, this initiative aims to create a fairer pathway to licensure.
- ▶ **Revised Licensing Rules:** Introduce appeals process for clinicians with at least four years of practice who have not passed the clinical ASWB exam or the EPPP. This ensures experienced practitioners can continue their crucial work without interruptions, preserving access to essential mental health services in communities.
- ▶ **Increased Support and Resources:** Enhance support with preparatory courses and fee waivers for pre-licensure exams. These measures will address specific linguistic and cultural biases identified in exams and alleviate financial burdens for socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals aspiring to become mental health providers.
- ▶ **Expert Taskforce:** Establish a task force comprising direct service providers from Michigan communities. Their firsthand experience will provide invaluable insights into the unique challenges and needs of their communities. Mandating task force involvement in policy recommendations



ensures that proposed policies are not only reflective of community realities but also responsive to them. This approach prioritizes lived experiences and professional expertise, fostering policies that are both relevant and effective.

Stakeholders who support proposed solution:

Following the release of the report from the Association of Social Work Boards acknowledging significant racial disparities in license exam performance, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has written to social work boards across the country urging them to pause the use of ASWB social work licensing exams. The CSWE requests include includes three requests of U.S. social work boards:

- ▶ Suspend use of ASWB social work licensing exams until recommendations can be made, based on evidence, to fix the inequities highlighted in the ASWB report.
- ▶ Grant all graduates of accredited social work programs appropriate licensure or pre-licensure status, without requiring an ASWB exam. In other words, use the degree as proof of adequate training.
- ▶ Consider following the lead of the Illinois social work board, which removed the ASWB exam as a requirement for social work licensure earlier this year.

Addressing inequities in Michigan's mental health professional licensing system requires a comprehensive approach combining administrative policy changes and legislative actions tailored to our state's specific needs. Implementing immediate steps alongside sustainable, long-term strategies will enable timely adjustments to the licensing process, fostering greater accessibility and inclusivity.



6 The Need for Review Boards in Underserved Areas: A Path to Address Developmental Delays in Michigan



The prevalence of developmental delays among toddlers in Michigan is rising, signaling an urgent call to action. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, 25% of children in Michigan have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions. Eligible students are those identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and require special education and/or related services.

In 2021-22, the number of students ages 3-21 who received special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million, or the equivalent of 15% of all public-school students. Among students receiving special education and/or related services, the most common category of disability was specific learning disabilities (32%). Recently, there has been a surge in efforts to undermine, alter, or promote policies that disproportionately benefit one group of practitioners over another through fear campaigns alleging that Licensed Master professionals will cause harm. These special interest groups want to implement rules requiring doctoral-level oversight of masters-level clinicians. This action imposes an unnecessary burden on master-level clinicians who are already licensed and do not need supervision.

The role of the licensing board is to provide oversight by establishing rules and policies. There has been no data or evidence to suggest that Licensed Master Level clinicians are a source of harm; such claims are speculative assertions by privileged groups seeking financial gain from policies written to privilege their licensure status, inadvertently resulting in a shortage of service providers, and causing harm.

This will further deter licensed professionals from pursuing careers that are cumbersome. Additionally, this does not guarantee error-free services. It is crucial that government department heads prioritize policies aimed at enhancing services rather than restricting clinicians' scope of work under the guise of protecting the public from licensed professionals. The board should be empowered to fulfill its duties when a policy violation or unethical behavior occurs. It is imperative to ensure that policies are in line with federal guidelines, licensing boards, and Medicaid policies to streamline the process of accessing services.

Recent data suggest a concerning trend, with an increasing number of children failing to meet key developmental milestones in cognitive, emotional, and physical growth. This issue is particularly pronounced in Black

communities, where systemic barriers and socio-economic factors contribute to higher rates of developmental challenges. These disparities underscore the critical need for targeted interventions that address the unique obstacles faced by Black children and their families. The impact of developmental delays is far-reaching, affecting educational outcomes, social integration, and long-term health. For Black communities, where access to early intervention services may be limited by systemic inequities, the consequences can extend for generations, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. Addressing this growing concern requires a concerted effort to understand its roots and to implement strategies that ensure all children, regardless of race or economic status, have the support they need to thrive from their earliest years. A study, “Racial and Ethnic Disparities for Unmet Needs by Mental Health Condition: 2016-2021,” published in the January 2024 *Pediatrics* examines gaps in treatment among children with depression, anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and behavioral problems. The study found disparities among children of different races and ethnicities that varied by condition and persisted after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics. Prior research has shown that nearly half of U.S. children do not receive care for a treatable mental health condition, and children from marginalized racial and ethnic groups have lower treatment rates than their White counterparts.

The legacy of government policy has been a large factor in the economic subjugation of black Americans between Reconstructionist and the modern Civil Rights era was a result of a combination of Jim Crow laws, actual or threatened private violence, and laws that gave monopoly power to private actors who discriminated against blacks, rather than irrational private discrimination and social custom in a free marketplace. The pursuit of the public interest, however, was seldom the sole motivation behind the passage of licensing statutes. States and municipalities frequently passed licensing laws at the behest of the organized members of the licensed profession to grant them a state-sponsored monopoly at the expense of those who could not get the license (e.g., Richard A. Epstein, *Forbidden Grounds: The Case Against Employment Discrimination Laws* 91-129, 1992).

In October 2021, the [American Psychological Association](#) published an apology to communities of color for its role — and the role of the discipline of psychology — in contributing to systemic racism, acknowledging that APA “failed in its





role leading the discipline of psychology, was complicit in contributing to systemic inequities, and hurt many through racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of communities of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives.”

Federal Guidelines mandate that states must proactively screen, identify, treat, and mitigate conditions promptly. However, the process often becomes entangled in selective policies that are not based on logic or reason but on fearmongering by groups with vested interests in manipulating policies to their advantage. For instance, most service providers in underserved areas are Licensed Master Clinicians who offer direct services. Historically, black communities have been underserved, leading to the establishment of state-level and licensing policies designed to protect these communities and guarantee access to certain services.

Requiring doctoral-level oversight imposes an unnecessary burden on master-level clinicians, especially those who do not need supervision. This will further deter licensed professionals from pursuing careers that are cumbersome. Additionally, this does not guarantee error-free services. It is crucial that government department heads prioritize policies aimed at enhancing services rather than restricting clinicians’ scope of work under the guise of protecting the public from licensed professionals. The board should be empowered to fulfill its duties when a policy violation or unethical behavior occurs. It is imperative to ensure that policies are in line with federal guidelines, licensing boards, and Medicaid policies to streamline the process of accessing services.

Proposed solution:

Michigan needs to take proactive measures to ensure policies do not inadvertently harm underserved communities, focusing on developmental services for children in low-income and racially diverse areas. The strategy involves:

- ▶ Establishing county review boards that include service providers and advocates for families to evaluate the potential impacts of policies on underserved communities.
- ▶ Utilizing impact assessments and community engagement to identify and mitigate negative effects of proposed policies on these communities.

- ▶ Tailoring state policies to the unique needs of each county through these review boards to ensure they are effective and sensitive to local challenges.
- ▶ Implementing policy waivers to adjust or halt policies negatively affecting vulnerable communities, safeguarding children's development, and well-being.
- ▶ Ensuring this comprehensive approach promotes equitable and impactful developmental support across Michigan.

The review board will be integral in overseeing the implications of any policies, including departmental approaches, councils, and proposed legislative language, directly or indirectly affecting children. Addressing developmental delays in Michigan requires a comprehensive approach that includes both administrative and legislative efforts. Administrative rules can be adapted to streamline the process of implementing policy waivers and facilitating the immediate empowerment of direct service providers. These rules can be adjusted relatively quickly to ensure that policies are responsive to the needs of children facing developmental delays, especially in underserved communities. On the other hand, legislative changes are necessary to establish and mandate the functioning of county review boards across the state.

Legislation would also be required to formally protect against policies that could unintentionally harm vulnerable communities or exacerbate service shortages. By distinguishing between the swift adaptability of administrative rules and the foundational changes that legislation can provide, Michigan can create a dynamic framework that not only addresses current developmental challenges but also establishes a sustainable infrastructure for ongoing support and improvement. This dual approach ensures a versatile and robust response to the urgent issue of developmental

delays, tailored to meet the diverse needs of Michigan's children.

Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

The concept of empowering local entities and prioritizing equity in policy implementation has seen success in various regions. For instance, states like California and Massachusetts have integrated local advisory councils and equity-focused waivers in public health and education reforms, leading to more tailored and effective interventions. These initiatives have particularly aimed at reducing disparities in early childhood development outcomes among underserved and minority populations. In California, local review boards have facilitated more culturally sensitive and community-specific strategies, which have contributed to improved access to early intervention services. Massachusetts has seen success with policy waivers allowing for adjustments based on feedback from direct service providers, leading to a decrease in developmental screening disparities. However, it's crucial to recognize the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics in Michigan, especially within its Black communities. The lessons from other states underscore the potential benefits of such an approach but also highlight the importance of customizing strategies to meet Michigan's distinct needs, avoiding a one-size-fits-all mentality and ensuring policies are deeply informed by the voices of those most impacted.

Stakeholders who support proposed solution:

The proposed solutions have garnered support from an array of stakeholders committed to addressing developmental delays in Michigan. This includes advocacy groups for children's rights, local educational institutions, pediatric healthcare professionals, and community-based organizations focusing on racial and economic equity. Also, families of children with developmental delays have been vocal

in their support, emphasizing the urgent need for policies that directly address their concerns. Their collective endorsement underscores the widespread recognition of the need for a comprehensive, community-informed approach to ensure that every child in Michigan can reach their full developmental potential.

In Michigan, a pressing concern has emerged regarding the early developmental stages of our children, particularly in underserved areas. With an increasing number of toddlers facing developmental delays, it has become imperative to address these challenges head-on. BLAC advocates for a multi-faceted approach to combat developmental delays in Michigan by adopting an aggressive approach that includes the establishment of county review boards, the prevention of detrimental policies through implementation of policy reviews, empowering direct service providers through policy formation, and introducing policy waivers, to protect vulnerable communities. These actions can prevent adverse effects on underserved areas whereas Michigan can ensure a brighter future for its children, practitioners, and black communities affected by developmental delays.

This comprehensive strategy is aimed at tailoring interventions to meet the unique needs of each community, particularly emphasizing support for Black communities and children.

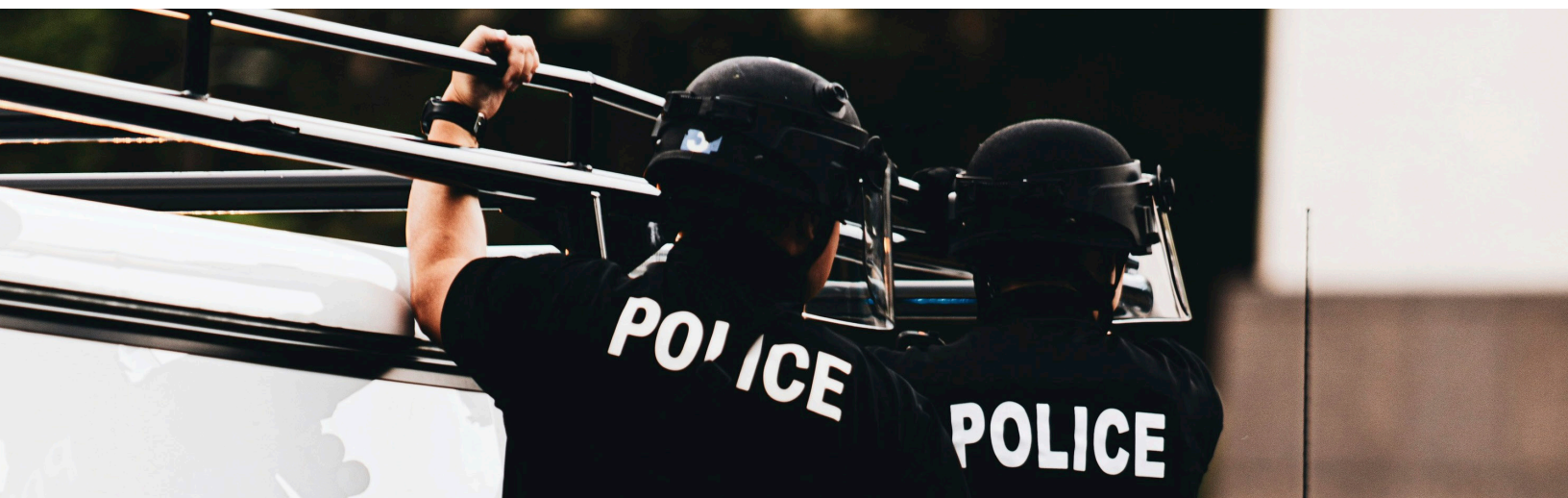
The execution of these proposals requires immediate action, starting with the establishment of review boards within the next six months, followed by the development and assessment of policies within a year. Direct service providers will be integrated into the policy-making process concurrently, ensuring their insights contribute to effective solutions from the outset. The introduction of waivers will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to address any unforeseen negative impacts swiftly. This timeline underscores the urgency

of addressing developmental delays and reflects a commitment to systemic change that prioritizes the well-being and development of all children in Michigan.

Proposed Role for BLAC:

- ▶ Serve as a key liaison for facilitating communication between department heads and vulnerable communities, ensuring that detailed reports and impact assessments are conducted and reviewed whenever new policies are proposed or existing ones are modified. This role emphasizes the need for evaluating potential impacts on developmental delays and underserved areas.
- ▶ Champion the advocacy efforts for the creation of local county review boards that focus on the nuanced needs of vulnerable populations. This includes pushing for the adaptation of policy waivers that are specifically designed to mitigate adverse effects on these communities.
- ▶ Undertake a critical leadership position in the selection and appointment of informed community providers to the newly established local county review boards. This will ensure that the decision-making processes are inclusive and reflect the perspectives and requirements of those directly affected by policy changes.

SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION



7 A Call to Action: Pass the Policing Improvement Package

The BLAC Safety and Justice committee is requesting Governor Whitmer to continue to support and advocate for the passing of the comprehensive bills included in the Policing Improvement Package related to community safety. These bills have been introduced over the course of 2022 and 2023 and have now stalled/become idle in the legislature.

This package enhances the bipartisan senate police improvement bill package from the 2021-22 term that was developed after the murder of George Floyd. Law enforcement officers have a difficult and important job and are uniquely trained, and in a great position of authority over others. The bills primarily focus on use of force issues that must be addressed to protect the community and law enforcement. Many of the bills build upon local policies that already exist in some law enforcement agencies in Michigan. Research has shown that certain use of force policies is associated with fewer police killings per capita and can improve safety for police officers. Several of the bills also address accountability for officer misconduct.

High profile killings of black people have become a part of mainstream media daily. Technology using cell phones, video, and social media, have thrust this crisis into public view in multiple ways. The killings of Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others, has served as a catalyst for a large social movement in the United States. Many black Americans perceive the justice system as deeply rooted in racial oppression and the dehumanization of people of color. Black Americans comprise 13% of our country, but they face 21% of police contact, make up 33% of the incarcerated population, and are three times more likely to be killed by the police.

There is a nationwide outcry for reform due to excessive beatings and shooting of black people in America.

A Harvard 2021 report traces the history of policing to slave patrols in the south.

Additionally, the Ku Klux Klan terrorized, policed, and controlled black people. Black people are disproportionately prosecuted and indicted, found guilty by juries, and receive longer sentences. [According to a Washington Post article, the police shot and killed at least 1,055 people in 2021.](#)

Ending racial inequity in the criminal legal system requires both effectively tackling disparities in serious criminal behavior and eliminating excessive police contact.

The following is a list of the proposed bills that need legislative action:

- ▶ No knock Warrants — Senator Erika Geiss
- ▶ Duty to Intervene — Senator Ruth Johnson
- ▶ Use of Force — Senator Stephanie Chang
- ▶ Body Cam Tampering — Senator Sylvia Santana
- ▶ Training Improvement — Senator Jeff Irwin
- ▶ MCOLES Revocation — Senator Sarah Anthony
- ▶ Separation Records — Senator Jeremy Moss
- ▶ False Testimony — Senator Ed McBroom
- ▶ Anonymity for Complaints — Senator Mary Cavanagh
- ▶ Resolution to encourage law enforcement agencies to participate in the Michigan Law enforcement accreditation program — Senator Sue Shink
- ▶ Racial Profiling — Representative Jason Hoskins
- ▶ Facial Recognition — Representative Abraham Aiyash

Proposed solution:

The Michigan House Fiscal Agency Legislative Analysis report from 2023, outlines funding for the Public Safety and Violence Prevention Fund under House Bill 4605 (H-2), which was passed by the House of Representatives with Rep. Nate Shannon as the sponsor, and House Bill 4606 (H-19), was passed by the House of Representative with Rep. Alabas A. Farhat, as the sponsor.

House Bills 4605 and 4606 would establish a “Public Safety and Violence Prevention Fund” that would proportionately distribute money from sales tax revenue to cities, villages, townships, and counties for public safety measures based on the level of crime in each local unit. The bills are tie-barred together, meaning that neither would take effect unless both were enacted. This Fund received a budget allocation for fiscal year 2025, but requires the legislation pass the Senate for those funds to pass onto communities.

Upon passage, the Department of Treasury would deposit \$75 million into this fund annually. The state treasurer would be responsible for directing the fund’s investments. Money in the fund at the close of a fiscal year would remain in the fund and would not lapse to the general fund.



Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

According to a [2021 Statista report](#), 21 states passed bills focused on police oversight, and 17 states had pending legislation.

The Minnesota state Legislature introduced 48 bills on law enforcement 18 days after the death of George Floyd. Governor Reynolds of Iowa signed a bill restricting police chokeholds the day Governor Cuomo of New York enacted a series of police reforms (themarshallproject.org). According to a database compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures, a nonpartisan association of state lawmakers, reported in 2020, that legislatures had introduced, amended, or passed 159 bills and resolutions related to policing, including bills that were introduced in both chambers. Only nine bills had become law by June 2020; seven were awaiting governor's signature; only Colorado, Iowa and New York had passed policing bills at this time. The Policing Project 2023 Legislative Wrap-Up identified more than 350 bills related to police reform introduced across 43 states and D.C., with dozens making it through the legislative process to become law. The most popular topics were use of force, officer decertification, and data collection and transparency, but legislators also sought to address a wide range of others, from warrant reform to police use of robots, and more. The Policing Project has provided testimony at a minimum of 20 public testimony sessions across the U.S.

Representatives of the following entities testified in support of the bills (6-21-23):

- ▶ City of Detroit ▶ City of Lansing

The following entities indicated support for the bills:

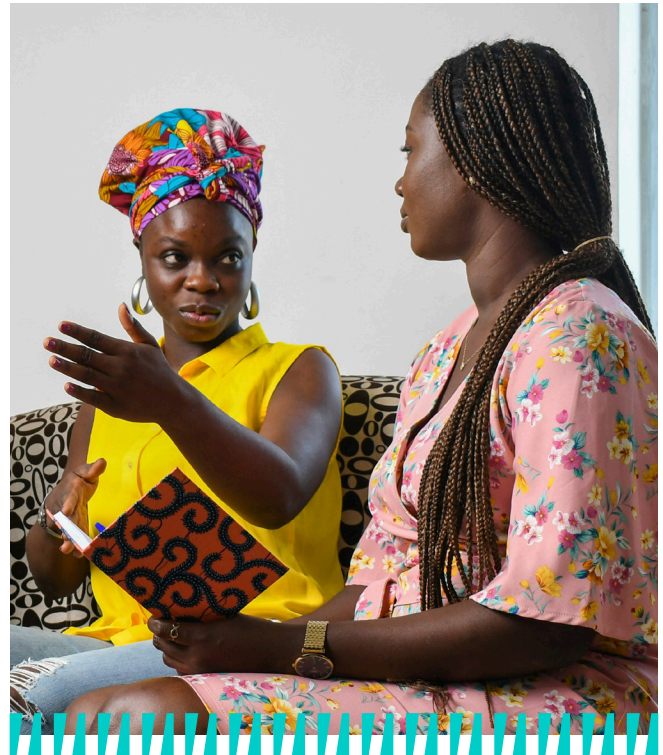
- ▶ Chesterfield Township (6-21-23)
- ▶ City of Ann Arbor (9-13-23)
- ▶ City of Grand Rapids (6-21-23)
- ▶ Michigan Municipal League (6-21-23)
- ▶ Michigan Townships Association (6-21-23)
- ▶ Oakland County (6-21-23)
- ▶ Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (9-13-23)
- ▶ Urban Core Mayors (6-21-23)
 - The Wayne County Executive indicated support for House Bill 4606. (9-13-23)

8 Call to Re-instate Community Violence Intervention Legislation and Increase Funding.

Community Violence Intervention (CVI), provides a public health approach to gun violence prevention, addressing the unique needs of the community where systemic racism, disinvestments, and trauma occur (John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). There are numerous sources who publish articles on the 10 most dangerous cities in Michigan regarding violent crime and compare in detail specific crimes in relation to the national average.

Muskegon Heights, with a population of 10,730, has a crime rate 330% higher than the national average, making it the most dangerous city in Michigan. Detroit, with a population of 635,000, has a crime rate 248% higher than the state average, ranking it as the second most dangerous city with rampant gun violence and gang activity. Benton Harbor, with a population of 8,892, has a crime rate 246% higher than the state average, marked by high levels of violent and property crimes amidst poverty. Jackson, with a population of 32,188, is 127% more dangerous than the Michigan average, characterized by high rates of violent and property crimes including seven murders and numerous burglaries. Harper Woods, with a population of 15,492, is 121% more dangerous than the average Michigan city, with three murders and numerous assaults recorded in 2021. Flint, with a population of 98,762, is 50% more dangerous than the state average, marked by a steep increase in murders in 2021 alongside high rates of violent and property crimes. Kalamazoo, with a population of 75,834, has a crime rate 166% higher than the national average, with 14 murders, numerous robberies, and assaults recorded in 2021 amidst high poverty rates. Albion, with a population of 8,310, has a crime rate 83% higher than the national average, marked by a surge in violent crime in 2022

alongside concerns over property crimes like burglary and theft. Highland Park, with a population of 10,978, is 94% more dangerous than the national average, with six murders and numerous robberies and assaults recorded in 2022 amidst urban decay. Saginaw, with a population of 49,892, has a crime rate 99% higher than other Michigan cities, marked by a 46% higher rate of violent crimes than the national average, significant property crime, and a high poverty rate.



The data underscores the urgent need for intervention in Michigan's ongoing violence epidemic. According to statistics from 2020, Detroit experienced a staggering 1,173 nonfatal shootings, placing immense strain on both the city's resources and its residents. Each nonfatal shooting comes with an exorbitant cost to taxpayers, averaging \$1.1 million per incident in 2019 alone. Furthermore, the economic toll extends beyond direct

expenses, encompassing long-term impacts on healthcare systems, law enforcement resources, and community well-being. The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform and the Live Free National Campaign's 2019 study revealed that each homicide in Detroit incurred an average cost of \$1.6 million, illustrating the immense financial burden associated with violent crime.

Economically, the impact of violence is profound, further entrenching Black communities in cycles of poverty and deprivation. Businesses shutter, property values plummet, and opportunities for economic advancement dwindle as violence stifles investment and erodes community cohesion. The resulting economic instability deepens existing inequalities, widening the gap between Black communities and their counterparts. Moreover, the mistrust and suspicion bred by pervasive violence hinder community development efforts, undermining initiatives aimed at fostering social cohesion and collective empowerment. In essence, the devastating impact of violence on Black communities in Michigan extends far beyond mere statistics, encompassing a complex web of social, economic, and psychological ramifications. Addressing this entrenched issue requires comprehensive, community-centered approaches that prioritize healing, empowerment, and systemic change. Moreover, the human cost of this pervasive violence is immeasurable. Behind the statistical figures are narratives of trauma, grief, and fractured communities. Families are torn apart, and individuals live in constant fear for their safety. The impact is disproportionately felt in Black communities, where residents bear the brunt of the violence. In addition to the economic burden, there are profound social and psychological repercussions. Studies have shown that exposure to violence increases the risk of mental health disorders, perpetuates

cycles of trauma, and hinders community development. These statistics underscore the imperative for proactive, community-centered approaches to violence prevention, such as the proposed Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs.

It is imperative to tackle the alarming rates of violent crime to safeguard public safety and enhance community well-being.

These elevated crime levels not only endanger individuals but also undermine trust and security within communities. The economic and healthcare burden resulting from violent crime further exacerbates these challenges, contributing to economic decline and straining healthcare systems. By implementing preventative measures and fostering collaboration among law enforcement, community organizations, and government agencies, Michigan can effectively address root causes such as poverty and social inequality. Empowering local communities to lead violence prevention initiatives ensures sustainability and responsiveness to the diverse needs of each neighborhood, ultimately leading to safer and more resilient communities statewide. CVI serves as a culturally appropriate outreach methodology that provides resources to mitigate the traumas associated with violence. This meaningful outreach combined with lifesaving, transformative support such as cognitive behavioral therapy, job readiness training, basic needs assistance, emergency relocation, case management, and more, can require a significant investment. One national evidence based CVI model, Advanced Peace, reports cost can range up to \$30,000 per participant with average reductions in violence between 20%-40%. However, a study conducted on

their Stockton, CA program found that for every dollar spent on the program, the public received between \$47.46 to \$123.42 in [savings] returns.

We want to emphasize the importance of Medicaid reimbursements in providing critical financial support for medical treatment and ongoing care for victims of community violence in Michigan, which will ensure access to medical treatment and ongoing care. It positions CVI as a proven, evidence-based approach to violence reduction, citing successful outcomes in other cities such as Richmond and Oakland, California. The recommendation emphasizes collaboration among key stakeholders, including foundations, government agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups, to create a sustainable and responsive framework.

As we continue to grow and implement CVI we support annual CVI appropriations for initiatives statewide. This funding will:

- ▶ Invest in culturally competent community nonprofits with a history of gun violence prevention efforts to play intermediary roles by offering training and technical assistance and conduct third party evaluation.
- ▶ We propose the establishment of 2-3 new CVI sites to validate the proof of concept in diverse communities, including Detroit, Flint, Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids and Muskegon Heights. This strategy aims to combat the lack of investment in community-driven safety solutions by showcasing their effectiveness in high-crime areas. Additionally, we will develop citywide systems to disseminate support services and coordinate third-party evaluations, ensuring uniformity and accountability in cities like Detroit and Muskegon Heights. Moreover, bolstering the capacity of local organizations to act as intermediaries will facilitate the nurturing and implementation of CVI initiatives statewide. This approach will entail issuing requests for proposals that prioritize evidence-based models and accommodate the capacity constraints of smaller grassroots organizations, thus ensuring fair access to resources and promoting accountability to achieve the desired safety outcomes across Michigan's communities.



Other states/jurisdictions that have adopted this solution:

Recent federal-level progress in implementing and funding public health strategies for preventing violence, coupled with persistently high rates of violent crime in Detroit, have revived demands for solutions. In 2021, the Biden Administration announced the Community Violence Intervention Initiative aimed to combat historically high rates of violence across the nation. The initiative named 16 cities for targeted investment and allocated \$250 million in federal resources. In response, dozens of cities have begun to invest in and adopt these community driven approaches to violence reduction, including Newark, Seattle, Los Angeles, Memphis, Baltimore, and Miami.

The use of CVI evidence-informed strategies to reduce violence through tailored, community-centered initiatives, can predictably yield between a 20-40% reduction in violence when implemented correctly. Organizations reporting extreme safety reduction and success include Advance Peace (up to 66%) in Richmond, CA, and Ceasefire (51%) in Oakland, CA. These outcomes are based on engaging individuals

and groups at the center of violence access to transformative services to prevent and disrupt cycles of violence and retaliation. Individuals likely to commit or experience violence — or often both, are linked with trusted messengers that have walked a similar path, and are connected to resources that save lives, address trauma, provide opportunity, and improve the physical, social, and economic root causes of violence.

Stakeholders who support proposed solution:

Several key stakeholders statewide are deeply invested in the success and resourcing of our CVI initiative. The Hudson-Webber Foundation, along with the City of Detroit, is supporting our efforts to continue the ShotSpotter program, highlighting their commitment to enhancing community safety. Furthermore, organizations such as Community Justice, Equal Justice USA, Moms Demand Action, and March for Our Lives are invaluable allies in our mission to address violence and promote community well-being. Together, these stakeholders bring diverse expertise and resources to bolster our CVI ecosystem and create lasting positive change across Michigan.

Proposed solution:

Our recommendation advocates for a comprehensive approach to addressing the pervasive issue of community violence in Michigan, particularly in cities like Detroit, where the impact is most pronounced. It emphasizes the urgent need for intervention, citing alarming statistics from 2020, such as the 1,173 nonfatal shootings in Detroit, and the exorbitant economic costs associated with each incident. BLAC is seeking legislative action, including the passage of HB 4605 and 4606, to secure perpetual funding for CVI initiatives, with an allocation of \$7 million annually. The initial investment is for \$43 million per year in CVI initiatives, eventually increasing to \$90 million (per year) to support statewide needs. This investment would establish a robust CVI ecosystem, comprising outreach, wraparound support, mental health services, and job opportunities, while also empowering grassroots organizations and leveraging successful models to drive positive outcomes.

The recommendation should be executed through a multi-faceted approach that involves legislative action, strategic investment, and collaborative partnerships. Simultaneously, a phased approach to funding should be implemented, starting with an initial investment of \$43 million annually to establish a robust CVI ecosystem in high-need areas like Detroit. This investment should eventually scale up to \$90 million to support statewide needs, ensuring comprehensive coverage and equitable access to violence prevention resources.

In conjunction with legislative measures, strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including foundations, government agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups, are essential for effective implementation. These partnerships will facilitate the coordination of resources, expertise, and services needed to address the root causes of violence and promote community well-being. Additionally, the proposal highlights the importance of leveraging successful models like Force Detroit to drive positive outcomes and validate the proof of concept for CVI initiatives statewide. While the proposed timeline for implementation may vary based on legislative processes and resource availability, it is imperative to prioritize swift action to address the urgent needs of communities affected by violence. A phased approach to funding allocation, along with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, will ensure that resources are deployed effectively and efficiently to maximize impact. Overall, the execution of the proposed solution requires a collaborative and data-driven approach, guided by a commitment to promoting safety, healing, and resilience in communities across Michigan.

BLAC will play a crucial role in supporting the adoption of the proposed solution by engaging in advocacy, coalition-building, and community outreach efforts. BLAC will raise awareness about the importance of CVI initiatives and the need for legislative support, leveraging its platform to amplify the voices of impacted communities and garner public support for the proposed measures, including HB 4605 and 4606. Additionally, BLAC will collaborate with key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and advocacy groups, to build consensus and mobilize resources for the implementation of CVI programs. This may involve organizing advocacy campaigns, hosting community forums, and facilitating dialogue between stakeholders to address concerns, identify priorities, and develop action plans. By fostering collaboration and collective action, BLAC will create a supportive ecosystem for the adoption and implementation of the proposed solution, ensuring that it meets the diverse needs of communities across Michigan.

By intensifying organizing efforts to advocate for increased CVI investment statewide, we aim to garner backing for initiatives akin to the proposed Detroit Office of Neighborhood Safety in cities such as Kalamazoo and Saginaw.

Michigan.gov/BLAC

